



ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION
(DEAI) UPDATE



DEAI COMMITMENTS

We value diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion as drivers of staff empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. We believe multiple perspectives and a healthy respect for differing views strengthen our organization by expanding our thinking.

We embrace the challenge of exploring the complex stories embedded in our history and artworks as we work towards continued relevance of the Museum and collection to each visitor.

We work together as Board and staff to ensure that our members, partners, and key stakeholders reflect and embrace these core values.

The Gardner is an inclusive Museum that welcomes everyone. All visitors and staff have the right to a safe, respectful experience at the Museum. Discrimination or harassment will not be tolerated in any form.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility & Inclusion (DEAI) is one of the four institutional [values](#) articulated in the ISGM strategic plan. In 2020, the Gardner established both board and staff teams to focus on the ways we manifest this commitment throughout the institution.

In an effort to communicate transparently about our work—both in terms of progress and continued opportunities for improvement—we have prepared this DEAI Update, which is organized within the framework of the ISGM DEAI Commitments, representing the roadmap of our journey to the ongoing integration of DEAI into the fabric of the Gardner’s organizational culture.

We will hold ourselves accountable by monitoring our progress and sharing our successes and challenges as we create, innovate, and collaborate to live our values and renew the promise of Isabella’s mission.

The Gardner will continue to affirm and act upon the DEAI Commitments in the following ways:

GOVERNANCE

Advancing our institutional governance to reflect the diversity we are seeking and uphold a high standard of leadership by adhering to term limits (making room for new voices, expertise, and points of view) for all Trustees and Advisors.

- We have committed to yearly Board recruiting goals that uphold DEAI aspirations. The current Board of Trustees is comprised of 29% people of color. In FY21, the Board of Trustees is working to identify, cultivate, and elect 4 to 6 new Trustees, with 50% BIPOC. Over the next two years the Board of Advisors is also working to recruit 10-20 new advisors with greater emphasis on diversity.



PLANNING AND COLLABORATIONS

- Updating and evolving the exhibition and interpretation planning process to center critical, diverse, and local voices in exhibition development, interpretation, and programming
- Prioritizing co-creation and mutually beneficial, meaningful collaboration by building on a long history of ongoing relationships with artists and performers that are Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC). Examples include: the Neighborhood Salon Luminaries, Polly Thayer Starr Studio Artist programs (85% of participants identify as BIPOC), and Community Engagement programs. Recent specific initiatives are:



- A new digital series, 8 *Luminary Lens* and 2 Amplifier projects - one of which launched on Indigenous People's Day co-created with our local Indigenous collaborators.
- *In the Studio*, another digital series that takes us into 8 of our collaborating artists' workspaces to see how they work and how the Gardner's collection inspires them.
- The two-year Visiting Curator for Performing Arts initiative, a paid rotating position specifically designed to foster more diverse perspectives, to build meaningful collaboration with a performing artist, and to enable the Visiting Curator to participate in curatorial discussions and programmatic decision-making.



- Partnering with Theo Tyson, the Polly Thayer Starr Fellow in American Arts and Culture at the Boston Athenaeum, as co-curator of the upcoming Muholi exhibition. Theo Tyson worked extensively with the Gardner on the Boston's Apollo exhibition.
- Continuing *The Larger Conversation (TLC)* series, a program that features 3-4 diverse perspectives around a central theme or issue in our culture.

- Supporting social justice through our collaborations, commissions, and partnerships with community organizations dedicated to cultural and artistic equity.



- Building a relationship with the Pao Arts Center and the Chinese Folk Art Workshop to connect Chinese and Chinese American audiences to the Shen Wei exhibition.
 - Advancing our paid internship opportunities, currently through a partnership with Bunker Hill Community College, of which 61% of the students identify as BIPOC.
 - Strengthening our intensive partnership with Boston Public Schools via the *Thinking Through Art* program. This year the Museum educators have provided in-depth training online with 70 teachers who work with 5000 students in 33 schools throughout the city.
 - Continuing to support classical music performances by women composers (currently 6% nationally and 19% at the Gardner) and composers from “under-represented racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages” (currently 8% nationally and 27% at the Gardner).
- Collaborating with a local Tribe to create an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement that pays tribute to the original inhabitants of the land, and strengthens our relationship with one of the communities we serve, while acknowledging the complex history of the Museum’s location. The Land Acknowledgement statement will be incorporated into the Museum’s standard language in printed materials, on the website, and shared at public gatherings.
- Focusing greater attention on increasing accessibility.
 - Translating labels and related website resources for the exhibition, *Shen Wei: Painting in Motion*, into Mandarin
 - Spotlight talks recorded to highlight artworks in the collection which will be translated into American Sign Language and closed captioning, available on our website for use both on-site and online.
 - More than doubling Museum free hours (from 37 to 95) by adding 9 free first Thursdays from 3-9 pm, plus maintaining our 3 free admission days (Indigenous People's Day, MLK Day, and Frank Hatch Day).

HIRING AND HR POLICIES

- Diversifying the employee candidate pool by:
 - Engaging in equitable hiring practices and recruiting strategies that emphasize different lived experiences and various types of expertise (that have not been historically valued within the art museum sector).
 - Expanding resources for sourcing diverse candidates, ensuring rigor and equity in the recruitment process and interviewing approach, and evaluating the success of diverse recruiting resources and methods for every non-frontline hire.
- Valuing staff at every level and maintaining multiple channels for input through interdepartmental teams and working groups dedicated to enhancing organizational culture.

- Examples include: Voices, the staff led DEAI Strategy Group, and the performance enrichment initiatives such as the Career Step Up Program for VSAs.



- Committing to recurring institutional self-critique and continuing education by:
 - Using the results of the cultural assessment conducted with staff, volunteers, and board members in 2019 to inform strategic plan initiatives, DEAI training, and ongoing education for staff and Board.
 - Maintaining introductory implicit bias training for all new employees and well as the full Board. All existing staff will have been trained as of January 2021 and the Board participated in training in July and August 2020. We also continued in November and December 2020 further Anti-Bias training with 138 volunteers and Museum Teachers.
 - Continuing to build in-house capacity to offer DEAI learning/educational sessions for new hires and newly elected Advisors and Board members.
 - Reviewing our organizational policies and practices through an equity lens on a regular basis. For example, a cross departmental team is leading the vendor diversity project to identify and hire diverse vendors, suppliers, artists, and collaborators and to develop new procurement processes within the DEAI framework.

- Examining the decision-making process of standing Board committees (for example, considering the staff diversity of the investment fund managers we work with and the nature of their holdings relative to the Museum's core values)
- Researching the sources of the wealth of the Gardner and Stewart families with the aims of providing further transparency into our institutional history and delivering an up-to-date portrait of our founder to visitors. A new biography of Isabella that includes this information is planned for FY22.
- Addressing workplace concerns and conduct through our HR policies and procedures and continuing to mandate the Respectful Visitor Experience policy that outlines expectations and protocols for visitors and staff members (posted on our website and in the Museum map). All grievances from staff, visitors, or community members are addressed in a timely manner by Human Resources, a member of senior leadership and/or the Museum's director.
- Complying with all local and federal laws in employment policies regarding salary, benefits, and family leave, including but not limited to benefits to full time temporary staff who remain longer than 90 days, and paid parental leaves up to a maximum of 6 weeks.